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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Rural Electrification Administration  
Washington 25, D. C.

March 11, 1946

To: REA Personnel With War Service Status <sup>o</sup>

From: John W. Asher, Jr., Chief, Personnel Division

Subject: \*How You Are Affected by Executive Order 9691 and Subsequent Civil Service Regulations

Recently a meeting was called for the purpose of giving REA employees in Washington with war service status the best information that could be made available as to how they are affected by Executive Order 9691 and subsequent Civil Service Regulations related thereto.

Briefly, the Executive Order requires the Civil Service Commission to discontinue all war service appointments and to hold competitive examinations for the purpose of establishing appropriate registers, so that probational indefinite appointments (commonly called permanent appointments) may again be made for positions with the Federal Government. Employees with war service appointments will compete in these examinations with the general public and if they qualify and can be reached on the register by the agency in which they are employed, their appointments will be converted to probational indefinite status. Certain employees with war service status will be eligible for such conversion without taking a competitive examination.

During the interim period between the discontinuance of war service appointments and the establishment of registers, agencies of the Federal Government are given direct recruiting authority, under certain standards, to make temporary appointments pending examination.

For the purpose of giving you detailed information in writing with regard to the above, and particularly for the benefit of our personnel in the field who were unable to attend the meeting, a resumé of the information made available follows.

Mr. John Steele of the Examining Staff of the Civil Service Commission in Washington, made a presentation to the meeting, and he has kindly consented to give us the text of his talk for inclusion in this memorandum.

"Mr. Asher; Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my intent to give you, insofar as I am able, a clear statement of the present situation under the new Executive Order. You have read various articles in the papers about it and so far as they went, those articles have tended to be accurate. Some of what I have to say today, you may, therefore, already know.

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I want to limit my discussion to the problems of those of you who have purely war service appointments. Mr. Asher has something to add regarding those of you who previously served under a classified service appointment.

First let me go into the purpose of having war service appointments. By Executive Order 9063, the President directed the Civil Service Commission to stop authorizing permanent appointments in the Federal service and instead to authorize war service appointments. This change went into effect during March, 1942.

A war service appointment is one originally authorized for not to exceed the war and six months thereafter. Under the new Executive Order, such an appointment may be extended beyond that period in the discretion of the Civil Service Commission. The President explained in Executive Order 9063 the reasons for making war service appointments. I can do no better than to quote his words:

'Whereas millions of the citizens of this country are engaged in war industries or have been or expect to be called to duty with the armed forces of the United States, which militates against their competing for employment in the Federal service, and greatly diminishes the number of persons available for competitive positions in the Federal service; and

Whereas it is essential that there be no delay during the present emergency in filling positions in the Federal service with qualified persons.'

Briefly then, war service appointments were authorized because of the inability of those in the armed forces and in war industries to compete for Federal employment, and secondly for the reason that there could not be adherence to the normal civil service requirements at a time when the utmost speed was necessary and when there was a critical undersupply of applicants.

In his latest order, the President has directed the Civil Service Commission to return to the peacetime practice of making permanent appointments. The Commission will begin to announce examinations for permanent appointments in the very near future. However, let me stress to you that this is a tremendous task. We have to start from scratch. We have today no registers of eligibles for permanent appointment. Our war service registers have been expired and will not be used for that purpose. We must give new examinations for all of the hundreds of types of positions in the Federal service. It may be as much as 18 months before we give the last of these examinations. I may tell you now, however, that one of the first to be held will be that for stenographer and typist.

What then can you do as a war service appointee in view of the new Executive Order? What will you have to do to secure a permanent appointment? What sort of an examination will you have to take? What are your chances? These and many other questions are no doubt bothering you. Some of these questions I can answer, some Mr. Asher



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will answer, and others will have to be answered later. We will keep Mr. Asher advised of developments and I am certain that he intends to keep you advised.

My first advice to you is to sit tight for the time being. Many of you will secure permanent appointments by taking competitive examinations. Some of you will not even have a chance to compete for over a year. Each of you may be retained in the service until the eligible register for your particular position is set up. In other words, there is no immediate prospect of your separation from the service. How many of you will secure permanent appointments is dependent on several factors. One of these is the amount of competition in the examinations. For example, it is possible that there will not be a great amount of competition for stenographer and typist positions. It is possible that every stenographer and typist here who passes the examination can secure a permanent appointment. In many other occupations the same situation may prevail.

My next advice to you is to prepare for the examination. If you are a stenographer and your speed or accuracy are below average, brush up on it -- study at home or take a refresher course. If you are a Junior Engineer, review the basic principles of your profession. It is not possible to state definitely what examinations will be written and which ones will be unassembled -- that is based solely on experience and training. Generally speaking, clerical examinations will be written; skilled trades examinations will be unassembled; junior professional examinations will be written; higher administrative and professional examinations will be unassembled. There will be exceptions to this. In all examinations where experience or training is a factor in determining your rating, be sure to give a full statement of that experience and rating. Don't be a shrinking violet. If you have had good experience tell us about it. Don't make us guess -- with the possibility that you may get a lower rating than you deserve. Will Rogers used to say, 'All I know is what I read in the papers'. Pretty much the same thing is true with regard to civil service applications. Most of what the civil service examiners and the appointing officers know about candidates for government jobs is what they read in the applications.

Third, take the examination given for your position. We will announce it publicly. Watch the newspapers. Watch your personnel bulletin boards. Mr. Asher will have something to tell you later about the part his office will play in keeping you advised. You must take the examination in order to get a permanent appointment at this time. Any rating or any application you may have filed in the past will not help you. If you fail to compete or fail to pass the examination you cannot be appointed permanently. The responsibility for seeing that you file an application for the right examination and take that examination is on your shoulders. Your personnel office can do no more than keep you advised. However, do not file your application now. Wait until the examination for your position is announced. Your personnel office will advise you which examination is the appropriate one for your position.



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If you make an eligible rating in the examination, what then?

There are two ways by which you can be considered for permanent appointment. The first is the standard way -- that is by your rating being reached on the eligible register. The second method is contained in the new Executive Order. Let me read it:

'When the Commission has established an appropriate register of eligibles through open competitive examination for promotional appointment, it may, upon recommendation of the head of the agency concerned, confer a classified civil service status upon any person serving in a position which would be filled by certification from such register who meets the following conditions:

(a) He made an eligible rating in the open competitive examination and the lowest rating reached in accordance with the regular order of certification does not exceed his rating by more than five points: Provided, that where ten-point preference eligibles are placed at the top of the register no person may be granted status under this section until all ten-point preference eligibles standing higher on the register have been appointed or have been given appropriate consideration in accordance with the regulations issued under the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944: Provided further, that in no event shall a non-veteran be granted status under this section until all preference eligibles standing higher on the register have been appointed or have been given appropriate consideration in accordance with the regulations issued under the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944.

(b) He is serving under an appointment which is not limited to one year or less.

(c) He has had at least one year of service under such an appointment: Provided, that military service shall be counted in computing the period of service.'

I am not in a position to explain this provision further at this time. However, I may say that in some cases it will be of real benefit to a war service appointee.

The fact that you may not be reached for appointment immediately upon the registers being established does not mean that you will be separated. The first to go will be those who failed to compete in the examination or failed to pass the examination. When and whether others will be dropped will depend on their ratings and on the amount of competition. For example, in the case of stenographers and typists, it is likely that even those with the lowest eligible ratings will be retained and given permanent appointments. Separations, if necessary, will be spread out over a reasonable period and within that period many present employees will be reached for permanent appointments.

Thank you."



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At the time the meeting was announced, we encouraged employees to submit questions in advance and, in addition, encouraged questions from the floor. Although many of the answers to the questions represent repetition of information already given in Mr. Steele's talk, we feel it important to pass them on to you.

1. Question: How long before competitive examinations will be given?

Answer: None have actually been announced. We understand from the press that typist, stenographic, information and entrance examinations for engineers may be among the first to be announced. The Civil Service Commission estimates it will have to establish approximately 4500 registers. With its present limited staff it may be months and even years before certain examinations are actually announced.

2. Question: As a war service appointee does my status change while waiting for examination?

Answer: No -- you will continue exactly as you have been with respect to leave, retirement, promotion, transfer and administrative increases.

3. Question: How will I know which examination to take for my position and when and where to take it? Suppose I fail to see the announcement through no fault of my own before the examination is closed?

Answer: The Civil Service Commission will announce each examination by sending copies to the press, Government agencies, and first and second class post offices. This agency will distribute notices of announcements to war service appointees and will advise those employees who should take the examination. We will post such notices on the bulletin boards in each division and use all available facilities to circulate this information. However, the burden of finding out about the proper examination, filing for it, taking it, and passing it is entirely on you. It is not the responsibility of the Civil Service Commission, the Department or this agency. If you do not file for, take and pass the examination you are lost. We will appreciate suggestions as to how best to get the information to you in the event our proposed efforts do not seem adequate.

4. Question: Will the Civil Service Commission use for the examination any one of the many Forms 57 I have filed in various places?

Answer: No. You must file a current Form 57. You are cautioned to give complete and accurate information about your education and experience, particularly that which is related to the examination for which you are filing, using additional sheets if necessary. Be sure that all questions are answered and that the form is signed. Do not expect the civil service examiner to "read in" what he should know to qualify you for the job. The examination is the open door between war service and permanent appointment.



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5. Question: If a war service appointee should not file for, take or pass the competitive examination
- (1) How long may he stay in his position before he must be terminated?
  - (2) If he moved from St. Louis to Washington with this agency, will the Government pay the cost of his travel and moving expenses back to St. Louis?

Answer: (1) He may stay in "status quo" (not eligible for reassignment, promotion or transfer) until replaced by someone from the register and then must be removed in 30 days.

(2) No. It is not legal at this time.

6. Question: How do I stand as a war service appointee in the event of a reduction in force?

Answer: You will be grouped with employees with temporary appointments made during interim period and the first to be terminated. Within your group non-veterans will go before veterans. Present war service appointees will have seniority over those with temporary appointments.

7. Question: Does REA expect to be able to retain all war service appointees who can be reached on a register?

Answer: Yes. The Administrator has asked me to say that we want to keep all of our war service appointees if possible. We have an investment in training which we cannot afford to lose at this time. We believe we will have sufficient budget funds to accommodate REA employees still on military furlough, to retain all of our qualified war service appointees, and to fill remaining vacancies for which appointees must come from outside the agency, such as stenographers, typists, etc. There may have to be some reassignments to accomplish this and to maintain a balanced staff. For instance, two or three divisions are up to the limit of their current budgets and they still have many people on military furlough. Some war service appointees may have to switch from office to field jobs. In my opinion, however, the stenographer or typist who is able to pass the examination will have little to worry about.

8. Question: Can a war service appointee collect all his retirement deductions if he is separated from the service?

Answer: Yes, if less than five years' service -- otherwise he must take annuity when he reaches retirement age.

9. Question: If an employee had civil service status before March 16, 1942, but now has war service tenure, will he have to take the competitive examination?



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Answer: No. Permanent status once acquired cannot be taken from you. If you have five years' service and permanent status you may be reinstated to a Government position for life. If you have not been out of Government service prior to March 16, 1942 longer than you had been in service, you are eligible for reinstatement. The appointments of war service appointees with permanent status will be converted during the next few weeks as rapidly as our overburdened clerical staff will permit. You will do us a real service by not telephoning or coming in person to inquire about your status. Please write us a memorandum giving the facts as to where, when and how you were appointed, if you believe you have permanent status. We will send you a notice regarding your status as soon as possible. We have authority to convert most such appointments, but some must be presented to the Civil Service Commission for prior approval wherever there is reasonable doubt of your eligibility.

### 10. Question: Will examinations be difficult to pass?

Answer: We have every conviction that the Civil Service Commission will use all the resources at its command in the use of the latest testing techniques to discover the presence or absence of your ability to do the job you seek to hold. This does not mean to imply they will be "stiff", but you are urged to brush up on your skills. This applies particularly to personnel in the lower grades. We feel that there is good reason to believe that war service appointees above grades CAF-7 and P-2 will take an unassembled examination. Taking an unassembled examination means you will be graded on information submitted on your application. An assembled examination means that you take a written test. We have announced refresher training courses for clerks, typists and stenographers. If you know of other desirable types of courses please suggest them.

### 11. Question: With the Executive Order abolishing war service regulations, is the duration of the war ended so far as civil service regulations are concerned? If so, will we have to continue honoring reemployment rights on war transfers after six months from the date of the Order?

Answer: No. End of emergency will be determined by Proclamation of the President or joint-resolution of Congress.

### 12. Question: Will we be allowed official time to take examinations?

Answer: We feel you will, although the Department has not issued a statement of policy. This will probably depend on the manner and place that examinations are held.

### 13. Question: What is apportionment and will war service appointees be affected in conversion to permanent jobs?

Answer: The total number of jobs in the departmental service (Washington D.C.) is divided among the 48 states on the basis of population. If the quota for the state in which you claim legal voting residence is filled, you cannot be appointed to a permanent



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P job unless (1) you are a veteran, (2) you are a war service appointee with prior departmental classified status, or (3) you obtain special approval from the Civil Service Commission. The states of Virginia and Maryland and the District of Columbia are usually over their quota.

14. Question: Will there be a Board of Examiners designated in REA to conduct examinations and rate REA employees?

Answer: No. There will probably be a Board of Examiners designated for the Department of Agriculture to conduct examinations and to rate applicants for scientific, professional and highly specialized positions which are peculiar to the Department. There may be designated a sub-group of this Board to cover such personnel in any particular agency or agencies in the Department; i.e., electrical engineers for work in the rural electrification program.

15. Question: At the present time I am a bookkeeping machine operator. Can I take the competitive examination for a clerk-typist and qualify for my present position?

Answer: No. You must take the examination which covers your position. However, you may take as many other examinations as you like.

16. Question: What is the difference in my status as a war service appointee and that of employees with temporary appointments made during the so-called interim period, between discontinuance of war service regulations and establishment of registers for permanent appointments?

Answer: You are both awaiting examination for permanent appointment, and you fall in the same group for purposes of reduction in force. However, temporary appointees referred to above are not subject to retirement, do not earn automatic administrative increases and cannot transfer to another agency without resigning and being re-appointed. However, they will get credit for such service for administrative increases and retirement purposes if they later receive permanent appointments.

17. Question: We have read in the press that war service appointees will get five-point preference when the register reaches a certain point.

- (1) How will the "certain point" be determined?  
(2) Will a veteran with war service status get "double" preference?

Answer: (1) There has been no official word on any point preference for war service appointments. The alleged proposal provides that the Civil Service Commission would determine a static point on the register after "the first flurry of appointments was made" (presumably most of the veterans) say 85. War service appointees having a grade at that point, or within five points thereof, could be reached for certification to permanent appointments, provided no veterans were passed over.



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(2) Yes, in this category only, there would be what amounts to double preference for veterans with war service status. A veteran would get five or ten point veterans' preference in addition to the advantage for war service appointments described above.

18. Question: Does a break in service since March 16, 1942 materially affect a war service appointee?

Answer: No.

19. Question: While still on terminal leave from the Armed Forces I was given a war service appointment. After I receive my discharge how do I go about getting a probational indefinite appointment?

Answer: If you are ten percent or more disabled or eligible for reinstatement, this agency has authority to convert your appointment to a probational indefinite appointment immediately. Otherwise, you will have to take an appropriate examination when announced.

20. Question: Will my current efficiency rating be considered in an examination?

Answer: No.

We will attempt to keep REA personnel informed of future developments and will appreciate any suggestions you care to make for the improvement of our efforts in this regard. Do not forget to write a memorandum to this division if you feel that you are eligible to have your appointment converted to permanent status without examination.

John W. Asher, Jr.  
Chief, Personnel Div.



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